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President  
Osa Tui, Jr.  
Vice President  
Logan Okita  
Secretary-Treasurer  
Wilbert Holck  
Executive Director

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON  
LOWER & HIGHER EDUCATION

RE: HCR 61/HR 62 - REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TO  
REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE ON ITS PROGRESS TOWARD  
PROVIDING A WELL-ROUNDED EDUCATION FOR ALL PUBLIC  
SCHOOL STUDENTS

MONDAY, MARCH 18, 2019

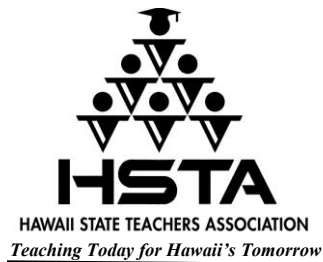
COREY ROSENLEE, PRESIDENT  
HAWAII STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

Chair Woodson and Members of the Committee:

The Hawaii State Teachers Association **strongly supports HCR 61/ HR 62**, requesting the Department of Education to report to the legislature on its progress toward providing a well-rounded education for all public school students.

In Hawai'i public schools, the adoption of high-stakes standards has over-emphasized standardized testing and, in turn, testable subjects, like mathematics and language arts. Consequently, students receive little instruction in and resource materials for physical education, arts education, civics, Hawaiian and Polynesian studies, and project-based learning, to name just a few content areas designed to cultivate curiosity and creativity.

Yet, there are alternative approaches being developed in Hawai'i that support a more holistic vision of education. These approaches involve integrated teaching that "links individual subjects, instructional units, and lessons to their larger meaning; helps students see connections incorporating a variety of instructional approaches," and promote "a deep sense of community and acceptance." This "whole child" approach to instruction requires not only broadening the curriculum, but also examining the struggles faced by students who come from underprivileged ethnic and social classes—52 percent of the student population in Hawai'i public schools hail from economically disadvantaged households. Hawai'i public schools are also racially and culturally diverse, with Native Hawaiians constituting the largest



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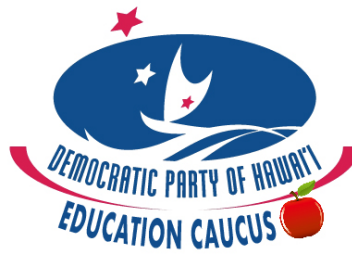
group of students system wide, followed by Filipino Americans, Caucasian, Japanese Americans, Micronesians, Latinos, Samoans, and Chinese Americans. Our teaching population, on the other hand, is primarily Caucasian and Japanese-American.

Thus, children should have the opportunity to learn about Polynesian and Hawaiian cultural traditions and actively practice Hawaiian language, arts, and customs. Our state constitution repeatedly cites the importance of Hawaiian language and culture, and we need to ensure that our public schools preserve and promote the Native Hawaiian identity and an appreciation of cultural differences.

Moreover, according to a 2014 study performed by Lois Hetland and Ellen Winner of the Harvard Graduate School of Education, education in music and drama shows a generalizable causal relationship to increases in verbal achievement and spatial reasoning. Researchers in the Department of Education Reform at the University of Arkansas likewise found, in 2013, that instruction in visual arts led to gains in critical thinking skills. Finally, both arts and place-based curricula immerse students in the culture, history, and heritage of their local communities, engaging students in applying cultural content to local community experiences.

Given the unique history of Hawai'i as a former sovereign nation and problems faced by communities dealing with the legacy of annexation, including higher risks of poverty and lower levels of academic achievement for Native Hawaiians, place-based education is crucial to giving students the skills necessary to solve community problems.

Because arts and cultural education perpetuate students' heritage and humanity, the Hawaii State Teachers Association asks your committee to **support** this resolution to urge the Hawaii Department of Education to report its progress of providing a well-rounded education for our keiki.



## **HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 61/HOUSE RESOLUTION 62, REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TO REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE ON ITS PROGRESS TOWARD PROVIDING A WELL-ROUNDED EDUCATION FOR ALL PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS**

MARCH 18, 2019 · HOUSE LOWER AND HIGHER  
EDUCATION COMMITTEE · CHAIR REP. JUSTIN H.  
WOODSON

**POSITION:** Support.

**RATIONALE:** The Democratic Party of Hawai'i Education Caucus supports HCR 61/HR 62, which requests the Department of Education to report to the Legislature on its progress toward providing a well-rounded education for all public school students.

This proposal calls for the DOE to furnish a legislative report containing data that is critical to ensuring that our state's educational policies promote a quality learning experience for all keiki, including in the following areas.

**Whole Child Education:** According to a 2014 study performed by Lois Hetland and Ellen Winner of the Harvard Graduate School of Education, education in music and drama shows a generalizable causal relationship to increases in verbal achievement and spatial reasoning. Researchers in the Department of Education Reform at the University of Arkansas similarly found, in 2013, that instruction in visual arts led to gains in critical thinking skills. Lastly, both arts and

cultural content engage students in the narrative, social, emotional, and historical life of their communities, encouraging them to solve communal problems with creative thinking.

**Special Education:** Hawai'i's special needs students deserve our help. For the 2017-2018 school year, the statewide achievement gap between high needs students—which includes SPED children, English language learners, and economically disadvantaged students—and non-high needs students was 32 percent for language arts and 28 percent for math. While State Superintendent Christina Kishimoto and the Hawai'i Board of Education have prioritized closing the achievement gap, doing so requires providing additional resources and preparation time for overburdened SPED teachers. Moreover, it is crucial that we determine the overall workload of special education teachers in Hawai'i.

We note that according to the Hawai'i Department of Education, our state's teacher shortage stood at 1,029 teacher positions overall for the 2018-2019 school year, 252 of which were for special education. We continue to lose approximately 50 percent of new hires after five years. In fact, the number of teachers exiting the teaching profession has increased by more than 80 percent since 2010. Our state's teacher shortage crisis is especially acute in special education. In the 2017-2018 school year, for example, 17 out of 18 teachers hired to lead special education classrooms in the Nanakuli-Waianae Complex Area had no SPED certification. Demand for SPED teachers is outpacing supply, in part, because of our state's inability to provide a decent salary and robust system of support for special education students and care coordinators.

**Class Size:** Class size is a social justice issue. Research conducted by the Institute of Education Sciences, within the U.S. Department of Education, concluded that "class size reduction is one of only four evidence-based reforms that have been proven to increase student achievement." Experiments in Tennessee, Wisconsin, and other states, moreover, have demonstrated that students in smaller classes have higher academic achievement, receive better grades, and exhibit improved attendance. Students benefiting most from smaller class sizes are from poor and minority backgrounds, experiencing twice the achievement gains of their peers. A study commissioned by the U.S. Department of Education analyzed the achievement of students in 2,561 schools across the nation by their performance on the National Assessment of Educational

Progress (NAEP) exams. After controlling for student background, the only objective factor that correlated with higher test scores was class size.

Smaller class sizes allow for individualized instruction, while also improving student engagement. Additionally, we note that the DOE's student-teacher ratios reflect the *total* number of students enrolled at a school divided by the *total* number of teachers employed, including non-classroom "resource teachers," registrars, librarians, curriculum coordinators, curriculum coaches, counselors, communications specialists, technology coordinators, and more. Gathering additional data on class size, overall teacher workload, and the impact of non-classroom teacher positions on class size bloat would allow policymakers to gauge what resources may be needed to reduce class sizes throughout the department in coming years.